

BOONE COUNTY HEADLIGHT
Thursday, Oct. 5, 1989

Pull Tainted Soil Removal Plan

A plan to remove contaminated soil from the Arkwood Superfund site near Omaha for incineration has been withdrawn.

The soil at the closed wood treatment plant is contaminated with pentachlorophenol, a substance that has caused cancer and other diseases in test animals.

A proposal to remove the soil last spring was mentioned in a February statement by the federal Environmental Protection Agency and a plan for summer removal was mentioned in June.

However, an EPA release received this week said, "After lengthy discussions with EPA and incineration companies, MMI has withdrawn its request for the removal."

"The contaminants in the sinkhole will be addressed during the final site remediation," the release said.

Mass Merchandisers Inc., which operated the creosote treatment site most recently, has paid for a pollution study.

The EPA release said concentrations of up to 7,000 parts per million were found in soil in the

site's wood treatment area, the railroad ditch and portions of the wood storage yard.

The study found PCP levels of 1 to 2.3 parts per million in New Cricket Spring, the EPA said.

The study found no air hazards or contamination of Walnut or Cricket Creeks, according to the EPA release.

The study is available at the Boone County Library, the Boone County Clerk's Office and the Omaha Public School Library.

Mass Merchandisers will collect more soil and water samples before submitting a comprehensive report to the EPA for further action, which is called "remediation."

Local groups can apply for grants of up to \$50,000 to hire consultants to advise them on the project. A group must pay 35 percent of the cost. If group asks for the maximum of \$50,000, it must provide an additional \$17,500 in cash or in-kind services. Information on the grant program is available from the EPA's Dallas, Tex., office at (214) 655-2240.

The EPA release gives the following background information:

"The 20-acre Arkwood Superfund site is located in an excavated area about 1,000 feet west of U. S. Highway 65, north of Cricket Road. The site consisted of a millwork shop, a wood-treating plant that used creosote and PCP, and a yard for storing treated wood prior to sale.

"The plant site was developed in the early 1900s when a railroad company excavated about 40 to 50 feet below natural grade to obtain fill dirt for a railroad embankment. Arkwood, Inc. began wood-treating operations at the site in the early 1960s. In 1973, the site owner leased the facility to MMI. The facility continued to operate until June 1984, at which time MMI sold or removed its inventory and process materials. The owner dismantled the plant in 1986.

"During its operation, the plant generated an estimated 6,000 to 7,000 pounds of waste per year. Wastes from the plant operations were reportedly dumped into a sinkhole at the treatment plant

until 1970. The sinkhole has since been sealed. In addition, waste oils were placed in a ditch adjacent to the railroad until approximately 1974, when MMI began using a chemical recovery system. Other wastes including liquids used to wash the treatment equipment, were accumulated in a tank and then spread over the wood storage yard to control dust.

"The Arkansas Department of Pollution Control and Ecology received a complaint about the site in 1981. Preliminary investigations revealed detectable levels of PCP in area ground water. In 1985, EPA proposed that the site be added to the National Priorities List. The site was formally added in March 1989."

The list is known informally as the Superfund list.

The previous owner was Hallie Ormond of Harrison.

No final determination has been made on who will pay for the actual site clean-up that will follow Mass Merchandisers' study.

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